

Message Text

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PAGE 01 GUATEM 04625 221441Z

42

ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-13 AID-20 OMB-01 DRC-01 PC-04 /150 W

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R 212315Z SEP 73

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0878

INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L GUATEMALA 4625

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: USGA PINT

SUBJECT: CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS NAME GENERAL RIOS MONTT
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

REF: GUATEMALA 4458

SUMMARY: EMBASSY SOUNDING RE DCG'S PROPOSAL OF GEN.
RIOS MONTT AS OPPOSITION UNITY CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT
REINFORCES OUR ORIGINAL ESTIMATE THAT RIOS WILL BE ABLE
TO ATTRACT CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT ON LEFT AND
SUGGEST THAT, FOR PRESENT AT LEAST, GOVERNMENT DOES NOT
INTEND BLOCK HIS CANDIDACY. END SUMMARY.

1. EMBASSY TALKS WITH CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADER
RENE DE LEON SCHLOTTER AND MAYOR COLOM ARGUETA REINFORCE
OUR ORIGINAL ESTIMATE (REFTEL) THAT CANDIDACY OF GEN.
RIOS MONTT WILL ATTRACT CONSIDERABLE SUPPORT AMONG
LEFT. DE LEON CLAIMS SUPPORT OF FURD AND NUMBER OF
DISSIDENT PR GROUPS INCLUDING THOSE WHO IN PAST HAVE
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PAGE 02 GUATEM 04625 221441Z

SUPPORTED FUENTES MOHR, GEN. CHINCHILLA. COLOM FOR HIS

PART INDICATED THAT WHILE HE STILL BELIEVES THAT BY RIGHTS HE HIMSELF SHOULD BE CANDIDATE, HE WILL SUPPORT RIOS. BOTH DE LEON AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE RUBIO REPORT THAT PRESIDENT ARANA, WHO WAS CONSULTED AT RIOS' SPECIFIC REQUEST, HAS NO OBJECTION TO RIOS'S CANDIDACY.

2. TALKS WITH PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS MARIO SANDOVAL AND WITH MINISTERS OF FOREIGN RELATIONS AND GOVERNMENT AS WELL AS OTHER PRO-GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND POLITICIANS REVEAL SATISFACTION WITH RIOS' CANDIDACY -- A SATISFACTION BORN LARGELY OUT OF RELIEF THAT DCG DID NOT PICK PARALTA WHO WOULD HAVE PRESENTED A REAL ELECTORAL THREAT. GOVERNMENT FORCES BELIEVE THAT RIOS DOES NOT POSE A REAL DANGER TO COALITION VICTORY. GOVERNMENT STRATEGY IS TO LET RIOS RUN, AND KEEP LEFT SPLIT BY ENSURING THAT CARLOS SAGASTUME DOES NOT JOIN OPPOSITION COALITION.

3. MILITARY LEADERS INCLUDING GENERALS RUBIO AND SPIEGLER DO NOT SEEM TO BE PARTICULARLY BOTHERED BY RIOS' CANDIDACY. EXCEPTION IS CHIEF OF STAFF GEN. LUCAS WHO STRONGLY DISLIKES RIOS, WHOM HE DESCRIBED TO CHARGE AS A "COMMUNIST S.O.B."

COMMENT: GOVERNMENT ATTITUDE TOWARD RIOS MAY CHANGE SUBSTANTIALLY IF HE BEGINS TO LOOK TO THEM LIKE A FORMIDABLE CANDIDATE, BUT CURRENT GOG ATTITUDE IS SUMMED UP BY A GENERAL WHO TOLD CHARGE "HE'S A LOT BETTER (I.E., LESS DANGEROUS) THAN PARALTA."
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